

The Teaching role of the Teacher of the Deaf working with pre-school children

Many Teachers of the Deaf are employed by the Department of Education and work as part of a multi-disciplinary team. Most of the work is family led and centred round helping carers understand the diagnosis of hearing loss, establishing care and management of any hearing aids and/or cochlear implants and explaining the stages of language development with the ultimate goal of empowering parents to make informed choices.

Many teachers undertake 'direct teaching' sessions with pre-school children which are designed to encourage parents to talk and play with their child to help develop language, become comfortable handling the technology, using strategies that will help their child develop good listening skills and be able to talk to family and friends about their child's hearing loss.

Each Service will work in different ways but the following is a fairly typical visit with a child and carer.

- As teaching this age group is family led the visit is arranged around the child and carer and **targets** that were discussed at the previous session and incorporated into a lesson plan will be the basis of the session.
- Carry out an **equipment check**, put aids through the test box if necessary and then do a listening and attending check, in line with the child's developmental level. **Inform** carer about how the equipment is functioning and how the child is responding.
- Model language with the child through play, **observing and assessing** their responses, **recording** them when possible. **Discuss effective and appropriate communication methods** for the carer and feedback ideas of good practice and helpful hints from other parents to help them make informed choices. This also encourages carers to talk and play with their child to help develop language, become comfortable handling the technology, using strategies that will help their child develop good listening skills and be able to talk to family and friends about their child's hearing loss.

- Using the Early Support Programme the child's **progress is reviewed** and further **targets set** for future sessions to facilitate progress.
- **Write up session notes and targets, record any significant information.**
- **Write a detailed report** once a year and **share this information and liaises with other professionals or agencies** involved in the child's care and support. The Teacher of the Deaf where appropriate will be the Lead Professional for the pre-school child.
- **Co-ordinate and facilitate** contact with other families with deaf children and voluntary organisations
- Teachers of the Deaf also **guide** parents through the process of applying for nursery and school placements and the statutory assessment process if this is required.
- They **also provide support and training** to pre-school settings in respect to the implications and management of hearing loss.

A large proportion of the time spent with pre-school children and their carers is spent involved in direct teaching and is a regular and on-going process. An experienced Teacher of the Deaf has the relevant experience to be able to deal with the many scenarios that can occur within family dynamics.